
CANCER FACTS

National Cancer Institute • National Institutes of Health
Department of Health and Human Services

Quitting Tobacco: Handling Anxiety ... Without Smoking

What To Expect

- You may feel quite tense and agitated within 24 hours of quitting.
- You may feel a tightness in your muscles—especially around the neck and shoulders.
- These feelings will pass with time.

Did You Know?

- Recent studies have found that most quitters report feelings of increased anxiety within a week of quitting.
- If anxiety occurs, it will usually begin within the first day, peak in the first couple of weeks, and disappear within a month.

What To Do

- Take a walk.
- Take a hot bath.
- Try a massage.
- Try to take a few minutes out of your day to meditate, or do stretching exercises.
- Set aside some quiet time every morning and evening—a time when you can be alone in a quiet environment.

Nicotine and Your Mind and Body

- Anxiety is usually measured as an increase in muscle tension as well as an increased sensitivity to muscle tension. Laboratory research shows that the anxiety produced from quitting tobacco may be due to temporary changes in your brain chemistry. There is some evidence that tobacco use reduces anxiety, so some of the anxiety you feel when you quit is actually what nonsmokers normally experience.
- Most of the anxiety you feel immediately after you quit is due to temporary changes.

Related Notes

- Nicotine replacement products deliver small, steady doses of nicotine into the body, and the nicotine helps to relieve the withdrawal symptoms often felt by people trying to quit smoking. Nicotine replacement patches, gum, lozenges, nasal spray, and inhaler appear



to be equally effective. Bupropion pills (which don't contain nicotine) also help relieve withdrawal symptoms.

How To Get Help

- If you or someone you know wants help with giving up tobacco, please call the National Cancer Institute's Smoking Quitline toll-free at 1-877-44U-QUIT (1-877-448-7848). The information specialists on the Quitline can provide suggestions and support to help smokers break the habit.
- The Federal Government's Smokefree.gov Web site (<http://www.smokefree.gov>) allows you to choose the help that best fits your needs. You can get immediate assistance:
 - View an online step-by-step cessation guide.
 - Find state quitline telephone numbers.
 - Instant message an expert through NCI's *LiveHelp* service.
 - Download, print, or order publications about quitting smoking.

<p>This fact sheet was adapted from material developed by the Tobacco Education and Prevention Program of the Arizona Department of Health Services and the Arizona Smokers' Helpline of the University of Arizona.</p>

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